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The history of the parish now known as "Christ Church, Ithan" perhaps properly begins with a grand-parent - the parish of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Rosemont, Pennsylvania, which, in the year 1880, started in Radnor, Pennsylvania a mission dedicated to St. Martin. Construction of a church building was begun there on King of Prussia Road in the latter part of that year, and the structure was finished in time to hear its first services in January, 1882.

About 1890 a mission, under the sponsorship of St. Martin's (which by then had achieved full parish status) was started in the nearby village of Ithan. By 1894 a small frame chapel was built for it at the rear of what was then known as "The Ithan Store" on the corner of Conestoga and Radnor-Chester Roads. In 1902 a frame parish house was added, and services were offered in the little chapel by the clergy of St. Martin's, assisted by a small but faithful congregation.

In the year 1919, shortly after the close of World War 1, one of the congregation, Mr. Theophilus P. Chandler, a well-known architect, designed and had built at his own expense the present lovely church (then called the ITHAN CHAPEL) as a memorial to Almighty God.

(Title to the building and land was vested in the Church Foundation of the Diocese of Pennsylvania which, in turn, passed on to the parish of St. Martin's, Radnor the responsibility of operating it and conducting services there. After Mr. Chandler's death, his wife bequeathed an endowment of approximately $50,000 for the upkeep and maintenance of the structure.)

On the Feast of All Saints Day 1919, the Chapel building was consecrated by Bishop Garland. The Diocesan parish records are obscure, however, and there seems to be no account there of the hallowing or its patronal dedication.

The first services were held in the new building on November 2, 1919 at 4 P.M. The Reverend G. W Lamb, then rector of St. Martin's, was in charge of both places of worship, assisted by the Reverend Richard Gurley (formerly of St. James Church, Philadelphia). In March of 1921. the Reverend Mr. Gurley was called as rector of St. Martin's upon the resignation of the Reverend Mr. Lamb.

During the next few years, the growth and development of the Chapel congregation was modest. The attendance at its services fluctuated widely, especially during the winter months when, because of the insufficiency of the heating plant, the dozen or so members of the congregatio often used lap robes to provide some measure of physical comfort. During this period, the vestry of St. Martin's more than once discussed whether or not it might be advisable to return the Chapel to the Diocese for operation, even though it meant the surrender by St. Martin's parish of the income derived from the Chandler Endowment.

For many years, the one Sunday service (except for a Sunday School) was held at 9 or 9:30 A.M., varying according to the schedule of the clergy or the desires of the vestry of St. Martin's. Then in 1928, the Reverend John Hart (now rector of Valley Forge Memorial Chapel) was engaged as curate. At about this time, the congregation began to grow; and the following year the matter of making the Chapel a separate parish was generally discussed at Ithan but was unfavorably regarded by the vestry of St. Martin's, Radnor. At a gen-

eral meeting in the fall of the year, members of the vestry of St. Martin's, Radnor spoke out against the so-called "separation project" and it was dropped. The Reverend Mr. Hart resigned and many of the congregation who had wished for it left.

At first a Sunday School was conducted in the basement of the Chapel, but later in 1925 it was combined with the Church School sessions at Radnor.

Prior to 1929, the Chapel was administered entirely by St. Martin's vestry. Immediately following the separation discussion, however, it was decided to have the Chapel represented on the vestry by three of its congregation.

In 1951 the Reverend Mr. Gurley resigned after serving for thirty years as rector of St. Martin's, Radnor. The Reverend William Jefferys was called to fill the vacancy and took charge of the parish in January 1952. Shortly thereafter, the Reverend James G. Ludwig 111, then in Deacon's Orders, was called as curate with the special responsibility to develop the Chapel and its Sunday School, the school having been re-established that year. From then on, with the installation of a new heating plant as a material help, the Chapel congregation and its school attendance grew steadily; and in 1954 it became apparent that additional facilities would have to be created. During the Reverend Mr. Ludwig's incumbence, he was advanced and ordained to the priesthood.

In the spring of 1954, a Parish Canvass Committee was appointed by St. Martin's vestry, a fund-raising firm was engaged and the entire parish undertook the raising of sufficient capital for a joint program involving both Radnor and Ithan congregations.....at Radnor to enlarge the church, remodel the Rectory and repair their school

facilities; at Ithan, to build a new organ and erect a Parish Building. The campaign met with great success; over $125,000 was raised, work proceeded to satisfactory conclusions in 1955, and one of the main objects (the erection of the Parish House of the Chapel land) gave impetus to the growth of both Chapel and Sunday School attendance.

Bishop Hart called the Reverend Mr. Ludwig from St. Martin's to undertake the organization of and assume direction of the newly-created Diocesan Conference Center. This left St. Martin's and the Chapel without a curate, and a search for one was immediately commenced, successfully concluding in the engagement of the Reverend Elof F. Johnson, who assumed his duties on September 1, 1954.

The growth of the Ithan congregation continued but in a large measure lacked direction and was not specifically defined for it was still as before, a Chapel under the pastoral rectorate of St. Martin's. Radnor and no clergyman was designated as its Vicar. Its Church School alone constituted a separate roll-call, all of whom were recorded as associated with St. Martin's, Radnor. The clergy from St. Martin's shared the ministration at Ithan by alternating services, the musical program was under Radnor's direction and all other parish activities and organizations were integrated with Radnor.

It had long been apparent that autonomy for Ithan was desirable and, as we have seen, on a previous occasion had failed to be achieved due to resistance from Radnor. Now during the 1956-1957 season, it was recognized by many of the congregation to be a pressing urgency which, if not accomplished, would not only seriously curtail the growth of the church but also perpetuate and worsen an already unsatisfactory pastoral problem. The matter was thus brought to the rector of St. Mart-

in's for resolution. No effort was made to bring the question of autonomy directly before the congregation at large or to the Bishop; but rather, the rector in the fall of 1957 identified the Reverend Mr. Johnson as his assistant, in charge of the Ithan Chapel and congregation with limited autonomy.

As had been predicted by some, the arrangement was found from experience to be unsatisfactory (perhaps less desirable than the previous program); and again by the new year 1958, it became necessary to consider decisive action towards obtaining full parochial autonomy. Several of the members of the congregation petitioned the rector of St. Martin's to call a general meeting to sound out and test the desires of the congregation. Again serious resistance was encountered; but in due time several meetings were convened, ballots taken and it was determined overwhelmingly in favor of parish status for the still called Ithan Chapel. Thus, only the canonical, civil and practical matters of "separation" were left to be accomplished; and in the spring of 1958 at the Diocesan Convention, the congregation at Ithan was admitted to Communion in the Diocese of Pennsylvania as an independent parish, dedicated to Our Lord under the name of CHRIST CHURCH, ITHAN. Subsequently, a Vestry was elected and the new parish was launched.

When parish status was a reality, the Reverend Mr. Johnson submitted his resignation, making it possible for the new vestry of Christ Church, Ithan to select and call a rector of its own choosing; and this they did -- by unanimous acclamation on June 26, 1958 -- reinstating the same Priest as the first rector and pastor of Christ Church, Ithan.